



Research Article

Music therapists' job demands, job autonomy, social support, and their relationship with burnout and turnover intention



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the main and interaction effects of job demands, job autonomy, and social support on music therapists' burnout and turnover intention. Data were collected from 163 music therapists who were members of the Korean Music Therapy Association or the National Association of Korean Music Therapists. Structural equation modeling analyses revealed that job demands had a positive main effect on burnout, whereas job autonomy and social support had negative main effects on burnout. The results also showed that job demands interacted with job autonomy in predicting turnover intention, while social support had a negative main effect on turnover intention. The present study contributes to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of music therapists' job conditions and offers suggestion for redesigning their job requisites as well as improving job resources as a means to prevent and decrease burnout and turnover intention.

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In Korea, the music therapy profession has been rapidly growing since the first music therapy master's degree program was initiated in the late 1990s. In 2013, it was calculated that there was a total of 1100 certified music therapists working in various settings such as hospitals, social welfare centers, schools, and private practice (Lee, Hwang, & Park, 2013). Although the number of music therapists is increasing, substantial research reveals that Korean music therapists continue to suffer from overwork, low income, and low job autonomy and supports (Choi, 2006; Kim, 2007; Kim, 2010; Lee et al., 2013). In general, research suggests that such job conditions are good indicators of professional burnout and turnover (Ghong, 2005; Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). In recent years, music therapy research also has identified various sources that trigger music therapists' burnout and turnover (Fowler, 2006; I.K. Kim, 2012; Vega, 2010; Y. Kim, 2012). However, most studies have only explored the one-to-one relationship between two variables selected based on researchers' interests rather than systematically addressing job-related factors within one frame.

Music therapists' burnout and turnover intention

Burnout was originally defined as physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by heavy job demands (Freudenberger, 1974). Subsequently, Maslach and Jackson (1986) conceptualized the following three components of burnout: emotional exhaustion (EE; feeling of emotional depletion), reduced personal achievement (PA; negative evaluation of one's work and accomplishments), and depersonalization (DP; negative attitudes and feelings about one's clients). Since burnout is known to be a chronic phenomenon resulting from the accumulation of various causes over time, individuals are often not fully aware of their burnout level and therefore do not make efforts to cope with it (Yun & Chung, 2011), which could produce undesirable effects. There are a number of factors that contribute to these effects. First, burned out professionals might experience mild symptoms of anxiety, depression, and fatigue that eventually prohibit effective job performance (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Second, burned out professionals could possibly hold negative attitudes toward their jobs (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Dixon Rayle, 2006), leading to absences and turnover (Maslach et al., 2001).

Therapists' turnover may result in both a negative impact on the individual as well as their clients and organizations. Music therapy skills play an important role in music therapy practice, and often take time to establish. However, high turnover prevents music therapists from achieving such competencies and inhibits

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promotion of professional growth. From a client perspective, high turnover hinders the development of rapport and trust with new therapists, resulting in dissatisfaction with service provision. Moreover, organizations might pay direct and indirect costs associated with employee turnover including separation costs, replacement costs, and training costs (Mor Barak et al., 2001). In sum, therapist turnover might decrease the effectiveness and productivity of both employees and employers.

The prolific body of research on turnover has indicated that burnout is a powerful predictor of turnover intention and individuals with a high level of burnout tend to have high turnover intention (De Croon, Sluiter, Blonk, Broersen, & Frings-Dresen, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Moreover, in Mor Barak et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis, it was reported that burnout was a more powerful predictor of turnover among human service professionals compared to other types of professionals. Consistently, in the music therapy literature, Jeong, Kim, & Kim (2013) found that burnout was a prevalent factor in music therapists' consideration of job change. However, a systematic relationship between burnout and turnover has not yet to be examined using a qualitative methodology.

Job demands

Job demands refer to “physical, social, organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental efforts that are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs” (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001, p. 501). Job demands may not be inherently negative; however, high job demands require increased effort by employees that can turn into job stressors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These job demands include both quantitative (e.g., work overload and unfavorable physical environment) and qualitative (e.g., emotionally demanding interaction) aspects.

Music therapists perform multiple tasks in daily work such as music therapy intervention, documentation, administrative work, and communication with caregivers/staff. The management of these types of duties often leads to high job demands. In a recent report about North American music therapists, the highest ranked concerns included lack of time/money for continuing education, lack of leisure time, inadequate salary, and burden of job and family responsibilities (Curtis, 2015). Korean music therapists reported similar results, indicating that they contended with demanding jobs with features such as heavy caseloads and overtime (Kang, 2011; Kim, 2010).

The majority of related research has demonstrated that there is a connection between job demands and burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; I.K. Kim, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2008) and turnover intention (Kim & Stoner, 2008; Mor Barak et al., 2001; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Moreover, several studies have found that workers with higher job demands were more likely to experience a higher level of EE (De Croon et al., 2004). Bitcon (1981) was the first researcher interested in examining music therapists' burnout, and identified unrealistic workloads and the need to make continuous adjustments due to crisis intervention as major sources of burnout. Later, in Clements-Cortes' (2006) qualitative study, it was demonstrated that music therapists working in palliative care had a large caseload that required frequent change due to the nature of the population, resulting in inadequate time for documentation. Subsequently, this type of situation may increase music therapists' experience of burnout. Additionally, Y. Kim (2012) found that job satisfaction associated with job demands, income, and peer interaction predicted burnout among Korean music therapists.

Job resources

Job resources refer to “those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that (a) are functional in achieving work goals, (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or (c) stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Job resources are necessary for employees because they facilitate coping with job demands and increase job performance motivation (Hobfoll, 2002; Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hofmann, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Examples of job resources include tasks (e.g., autonomy and performance feedback), organization (e.g., salary and job security), and interpersonal aspects (e.g., social support from supervisors and co-workers) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). In the present study, job autonomy and social support were used to measure music therapists' job resources.

It is well-known that job autonomy is a valuable resource for employees, and it is defined as the degree of freedom that workers have when performing their work in terms of scheduling and decision-making (Moregeson & Humphrey, 2006). In context of job autonomy, having this type of control improves employees' job performance by boosting self-efficacy (Axtell & Parker, 2003) and internal motivation (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Not surprisingly, research has indicated that job autonomy affects employee burnout (Glass & Mcknight, 1996; Posig & Kickul, 2003) and turnover intention (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Thus, it is speculated that workers who obtain a high level of involvement in job-related decision-making perceive a higher level of personal resources for coping with high job demands, thereby experiencing less burnout and lower turnover intention.

Social support, another type of resources, refers to “information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations” (Cobb, 1976, p. 300). In a work context, social support is important because it can help workers to achieve goals and reduce the effects of work overload on burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). A great deal of research has been conducted to examine the effects of social support on employee burnout. For example, social support has been found to have a significant effect on exhaustion of burnout (Bakker et al., 2005). Additionally, Yürür and Sarıkaya (2012) reported that social support from supervisors decreased social workers' EE and increased their sense of PA. Social support has also been found to be associated with employee turnover intention. Consequently, existing research has shown that perceived social support from work-related sources reduces workers' turnover intention (Mor Barak et al., 2001; Nissly, Mor Barak, & Levin, 2005).

Several music therapy studies related to job resources have been conducted. For instance, Knoll, Reuer, and Henry (1988) found that lack of support and autonomy were primary reasons for music therapists' burnout. Fowler (2006) also reported that a sense of control and feeling valued at work were significantly associated with PA. Moreover, I.K. Kim (2012) suggested that social support predicted music therapists' burnout. Additionally, when Kim, Jeong, and Ko (2013) interviewed Korean music therapists, it was found that limited environmental support and lack of job autonomy were factors that contributed to turnover.

The relationship between job demands-job resources and burnout and turnover intention

As previously noted, considerable research has been conducted to understand the factors that contribute to burnout and turnover intention. Consistently, the results have indicated that there is a main effect of job demands on burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; I.K. Kim, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2008) and turnover

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